

Three Sons



the three sons were overjoyed.

Lev Tolstoy

Three Sons by Lev Tolstoy

(The parable)

Father gave his son an estate, bread, cattle, and said: "Live the way I live, and you will always be well."

The son took everything father gave him, left his father and started living for his own pleasure. "Because the father said that I should live like he does. He lives and rejoices, and I'll live the same way."

He lived that way one, two, ten, twenty years, and has spent all of his father's estate, and nothing was left from it. And he started asking father to give him more; but the father did not listen to him. Then he started to appease his father, to make him gifts out of the best he had, and beg him. But the father didn't answer him. Then the son began to ask for his father's forgiveness, wondering if he had offended his father by something, and he again asked him to give him more; but the father said nothing.

And then the son began to damn the father. He said:

- If you don't give me anything now, why did you give before, and separated me, and promised that I will always live well? All of my old joy, when I lived off my belongings, are not worth an hour of the current torture. I see that I'm failing, and there is no escape. But who is to blame? - You. You knew this property wouldn't be enough for me, and didn't give me more. You told me only: live like me, and you will be fine. I lived like you. You have lived at your pleasure, and I lived at my own pleasure. You left more for yourself. Now you've have everything, and I have not enough. You are not the father to me, but a deceiver and a villain. Damn my life, damn you, villain, tormentor, I don't want to know you and I hate you.

Father gave the estate to his second son, too, and said only: "Live as I do, and you will be always well." The second son wasn't so happy with the property, as the first son was. He thought he deserves it. But he knew what happened to

his elder brother, and therefore began to think about how to not live off all the estate in the same manner as the first one did. He realized that his elder brother didn't quite understand the words: "live like I do", and that one should not live only for his own pleasure. And he started thinking what it means: "live like I do" and figured that it is necessary, like his father, to make himself the property like the one is given to him. And he started making the same property again, just like that one that his father gave him.

And he started thinking, how to make by himself everything that his father gave him. He began asking his father how and what to do; but the father did not answer him. The son thought that the father was afraid to tell him, and he began to disassemble all things to understand how everything was done, and spoiled and destroyed everything he received from his father, and everything he made new - all of that was not to the benefit; but he did not want to admit that he spoiled everything, so he lived and suffered, and told everyone that his father did not give him anything, and he did everything by himself. "And we all can do everything ourselves better and better, and we'll soon reach the time when everything will be perfect". That's what the second son told, while he had something left from his father's property, but when the last thing broke and he had nothing left for living, he put hands on himself and killed himself.

The father gave the same property to the third son and said the same: "Live the way I live, and you will be always well." And the third son, just as the first and second, was delighted to have the property and left his father; but he knew what happened with the older brothers, and began to think about what it means: "live the way I live, and you will always be well."

The oldest brother thought to live like the father does means to live at his own pleasure, and he spent everything and disappeared. The second brother thought to live like the father does means to make by himself everything what his father made, and also got desperate. So, what does it means: to live like as the father lives?

And he remembered all what he knew about their father. And no matter how much he thought, he didn't know anything else about the father except that

before nothing existed, he himself didn't exist; and that the father begat, fed, nurtured him, taught and did all kind of good to him and told: "live the way I do, and you will always be well." Father did the same to his brothers. And no matter how much he thought, he couldn't learn about his father anything more. All he knew about his father was just that his father was doing good to him and to his brothers.

And then he realized what "to live his father's way" means. He realized that to live like his father does means doing what he does - doing good to people.

And as soon as he thought that, his father was already near him and said: "Here we are again together and you will always be well. Go to your brothers, to all my children, and tell them what it means: to live like I do, and that it is true that those who will live as I do will always be well."

And the third son went and told that to all his brothers, and since then all the children, when they received the properties from their father, rejoiced not that they have got a lot of belongings, but that they can live in the same way as their father does, and that they will always be well.

The father - is God; the sons - are people; the estate - is life. People think that they can live alone, without God. Some of these people think that life is given to them so that they have fun in this life. They are having fun and squander their lives, but as the time comes to die, they don't understand why such life was given, where fun that ends with suffering and death. And these people die, cursing God and calling him evil, and separate from God. This is the first son.

Other people think that life was given to them to understand how it is made, and to make it better than that one which was given to them by God. And they are struggling to make another, better life. They, by improving this life, ruining it and thus deprive themselves of life.

Still others say: "All that we know about God is that he gives people blessing, tells them to do the same as he does, and therefore we will do the same as he does, that is benefit people."

And as soon as they start doing this, God himself comes to them and says:

- This is what I wanted. Do with me together what I do, and you will live as I live.